

**MINUTES OF THE
VETERANS REINTEGRATION TASK FORCE**
Friday, July 6, 2012 – 9:00 a.m. – Room 445 State Capitol

Members Present:

Sen. Peter C. Knudson, Senate Chair
Rep. Paul Ray, House Chair
Sen. Karen Mayne
Rep. Tim M. Cosgrove
Rep. Val L. Peterson
LTC Brent Baxter
Blair K. Carruth
Bart Davis
Dr. W. David Patton
Jon Pierpont
Terry D. Schow

Lincoln Shurtz
Mark B. Steinagel

Members Absent:

Brent Kelsey
Rick Schwermer

Staff Present:

Mr. Richard C. North, Policy Analyst
Ms. Esther Chelsea-McCarty, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Tracey Fredman, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, a copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Knudson called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., welcomed everyone and asked task force members to introduce themselves.

Rep. Cosgrove provided an overview of his interest and involvement with the reintegration of veterans. He said the state has resources and services, and hopes the task force will be able to identify ways to streamline the process so that when service men and women return home they may be integrated back into civilian society more successfully.

2. Utah Military Organization's Reports - What's Needed for Veterans?

LTC Brent Baxter, Utah National Guard, distributed "Talking Points" and raised some issues faced by returning service men and women that the task force may want to address including employment, substance abuse, mental health counseling, and community involvement with returning service members.

LTC Kenneth Lawrence, U.S. Army Reserve, concurred with LTC Baxter that finding employment is a big issue. He also discussed a need for an emergency financial program, and continuing mental health counseling.

Col. Craig Rice, Hill Air Force Base (HAFB), briefed task force members on the medical services available at HAFB to active duty members from all branches of the military returning from deployment, and indicated that medical services for veterans are provided through the Veteran's Administration.

Lt. Col. Chris Decker, HAFB, commented on services provided through the Airmen and Family Readiness Center to active duty military members, federal civilian employees, reservists, guardsmen, military retirees and their families. Lt. Col. Decker said that reintegration services are offered through the program, as well as financial assistance, and personal counseling.

CDR Clinton Cresap, U.S. Navy, Fort Douglas, stated that the primary concerns he deals with are employment issues and navigating the medical benefits system.

Mr. Nathan Wilcox, Army Wounded Warrior Transition Command, requested the task force consider a state provision for tuition for the training of a military spouse of a Purple Heart member who cannot work due to injuries, so that the spouse would receive training and be able to provide financial support to their family.

Maj. Patrick Castellano, U.S. Army veteran, discussed briefly his success in finding employment through the services offered through the state. Maj. Castellano also commented about the value of a battle-buddy assigned to a soldier while deployed, and suggested that veterans might benefit from having a type of battle-buddy when they return home, such as a family member or friend who knows what resources are available to assist veterans, and who is willing to help.

Lt. Aaron Norgaard, U.S. Army, Salt Lake City Veterans Administration, commented on the services available through the local Community Based Warrior Transition Unit, and the need for more federal programs and internship opportunities to help veterans find suitable work.

LTC Baxter noted that the Utah National Guard has a Community Covenant program, which provides a type of battle-buddy for service members and their families through local communities throughout the state. He offered more information on that program. LTC Baxter also referred task force members to recommendations made by the Oregon Legislative Task Force on Veterans' Reintegration Task Force in July 2010.

3. Utah Department of Veteran's Affairs Report - What Services are Provided for Veterans?

Mr. Terry Schow distributed "Utah State Veterans Benefits Fact Sheet" and a letter dated July 5, 2012, from Maria Fruin, George E Wahlen Department of Veteran Affairs Medical Center. Mr. Schow briefed the task force on the history of the Utah Department of Veteran's Affairs and its involvement in supporting veterans in the state.

Lt. Col. Frank Maughan, U.S. Army veteran, spoke of his experiences in the service, and discussed the need for additional resources to enable the development of programs to assist veterans.

Sen. Mayne stressed the importance of educating employers on their responsibilities toward veterans.

Mr. Karl Pfanzelter, Assistant Director, Salt Lake City Veterans Administration Regional Office, outlined some of the benefits provided by the Veterans Administration (VA), which include compensation, education, and vocational rehabilitation. Mr. Pfanzelter also indicated that over 50% of his employees are veterans.

Mr. Christopher Scott, Salt Lake City Veterans Administration Regional Office, spoke about the success of their Outreach Program, which seeks to find and assist veterans in the process of applying to receive benefits, free of charge. Mr. Scott described the efforts being made and stated that there are thousands of veterans in the state who qualify for but are not receiving benefits.

Mr. Brian Garrett, Military Relations Director, Zions Bank, commented on the Utah Veterans and Military Employment Coalition, the need for public educational institutions to serve the needs of veterans as successfully as private institutions, educating, and encouraging employers to put veterans to work.

Mr. Steve Allen, Salt Lake City Veterans Affairs Medical, spoke briefly of the need for increased awareness of the moral and fiduciary responsibility of the state to take care of veterans. Mr. Allen elaborated on driving, veteran's courts, and relationship issues, which are common readjustment issues of returning service men and women. He also briefly described issues related to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

4. Task Force Agency Members Reports - What Services are Provided for Veterans?

Due to lack of time, this item was not discussed. However, Mr. Steinagel distributed "DOPL Laws and Rules Concerning Military Personnel."

5. Other Items / Adjourn

The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, July 31, 2012, at 9:00 a.m.

MOTION: Sen. Mayne moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Patton, Mr. Shurtz, and Mr. Steinagel were absent for the vote.

Chair Knudson adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.